

# Fort Negley Historic Timeline

## April 1861 -- Civil War Begins

Confederate forces launched an attack on a U.S. military installation at Fort Sumter, South Carolina.

## June 1861 Tennessee leaves the Union

Tennessee became the last Southern state to secede from the United States and join the Confederacy. Nashville's role during the Civil War began as a major manufacturing and supply center for the Confederate Army.



Union cannon crews at the Tennessee State Capitol in Nashville  
*Tennessee State Library & Archives*

## February 1862 -- Union Army Captures Nashville

Generals U. S. Grant and Andrew H. Foote commanded a combined land and water invasion that broke through Confederate defenses in southern Kentucky. A Union victory at Fort Donelson on the Cumberland River led to Nashville's capture by the Union Army.

## March 1862 -- Andrew Johnson is appointed Military Governor

President Abraham Lincoln appointed Tennessean Andrew Johnson military governor of the state. Nashville became the Union Army's transportation and supply hub for military operations in the western theater of the war.

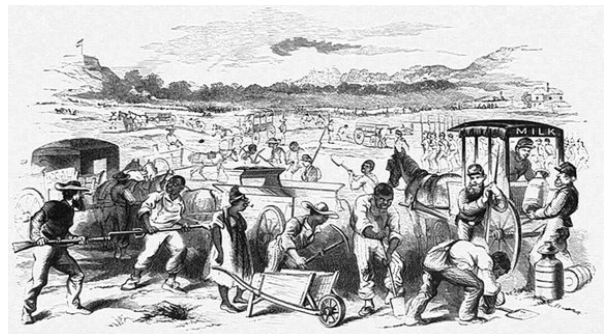
## July 1862 -- U.S. Congress passes Second Confiscation Act

The Act allowed the Union Army to create a much needed labor force by seizing and freeing slaves that were owned by Confederates. It also guaranteed the return of slaves to pro-Union slave owners in border states such as Tennessee.

## August 1862 -- Construction of Fort Negley Begins

Major General Don Carlos Buell, under orders from Military Governor Andrew Johnson, directed Captain James St. Clair Morton, the Army of the Ohio's chief engineer, to construct fortifications around Nashville to defend against Confederate counterattack. Morton chose an elevation known locally as St. Cloud Hill southeast of the city for Fort Negley.

To build the fort, the army impressed black laborers (including women) both free and slave. 2,768 African Americans were officially enrolled to build Fort Negley. The army established a camp at the base of the fort, called a "contraband camp," to house the laborers.



*Harpers' Weekly* lithograph showing African American laborers at Fort Negley

## November 1862 -- Laborers Defend Fort

Artillery stationed near the partially constructed fort participated in repelling a Confederate raid commanded by General Nathan Bedford Forrest. The Union Army denied a request by the former slaves and free blacks working on the fort to take up arms against the attack. Nonetheless, the laborers raised their picks and shovels and prepared to defend the fort from direct assault if necessary. The assault never came and Forrest withdrew his forces.

## **December 1862 – Fort Negley Completed**

The army completed Fort Negley and named it in honor of Union General James S. Negley, post commander in Nashville. Covering four acres, it was the largest inland stone fort built during the Civil War. 600 to 800 laborers died of disease during construction. Only 310 laborers of the 2,768 enrolled received wages.

## **January 1863-- Fort Negley Garrisoned**

Shortly after the Battle of Stones River in Murfreesboro, Union Major General William S. Rosecrans, commander of the Army of the Cumberland, ordered Fort Negley manned by four companies, housed within the works, to guard against a potential Confederate attack. The 12th Indiana Light Artillery garrisoned the fort throughout the war. In addition, soldiers from Illinois, Ohio, Tennessee, and United States Colored Troops regiments spent time at Negley.



Battery A, 2nd U.S. Colored Artillery at Nashville  
*Library of Congress*

## **August 1863 – USCT organized in Nashville**

The 12th United States Colored Troops regiment was organized in Nashville. Some of its ranks were African American laborers who built Fort Negley. Tennessee contributed more than 20,000 former slaves and free blacks to USCT regiments.

## **December 15 & 16 1864 -- Battle of Nashville**

The Confederate Army of Tennessee led by General John Bell Hood attempted to recapture Nashville. The guns of Fort Negley participated in the opening of the battle. Facing overwhelming Union forces, the Confederate army retreated south after two days of fighting.

## **1865 -- Fort name changed to “Harker”**

The Union Army removed General Negley's name from the fort after the army held him partially responsible for the Union defeat at the Battle of Chickamauga. The name changed to Fort Harker in honor of Union Brigadier General Charles Harker who was killed at Kennesaw Mountain. Despite the official name change, Nashvillians always referred to the fort as “Negley.”

## **April 1865 -- Civil War Ends**

Confederate General Robert E. Lee surrendered to Union general Ulysses S. Grant at Appomattox Courthouse, Virginia.

## **July 1866 Tennessee Ratifies 14th Amendment**

Tennessee became the first state from the Confederacy to ratify the 14th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution, which intended to secure civil rights for former slaves. As a result, Tennessee became the first Confederate state to rejoin the Union.

## **1867 -- Union Army departs Nashville**

After five years of occupation, the Union Army left Nashville and abandoned Fort Negley.



Cannon crew at Negley  
*Tennessee State Library & Archives*

### **1928 -- Nashville acquires Fort Negley Property**

With Fort Negley essentially dismantled and in a deteriorating condition, the city of Nashville acquired the Fort Negley property amid proposals to create a military park.

### **1936 -- WPA restores Fort Negley**

The Works Progress Administration (WPA,) a federal New Deal program, partially reconstructed the deteriorated fort. The WPA rebuilt the wooden stockade and added a small museum.



WPA crew restoring Negley, 1936

### **1945 – Fort Negley Closes**

Despite the recent restoration, the Nashville Park Board voted to remove all wooden installations from Fort Negley due to inability to conduct necessary maintenance. The Fort closed to the public with only the baseball diamonds in the park remaining accessible.

### **1996 -- Fort Negley Master Plan Developed**

The Metropolitan Government of Nashville and Davidson County solicited proposals for the development of a Master Plan for Fort Negley to increase heritage tourism and interpret the Civil War in Nashville.

### **2004 -- Fort Negley Re-opens**

Metro government invested \$1 million to develop walking paths and interpretive signage at the fort.

### **2007– Fort Negley Visitors Center Opens**

An additional \$1 million in city dollars went to the construction of a visitor's center at the site to serve as an educational gateway for the fort and Civil War Nashville.



Aerial view of Negley, 2004